

August 9, 2001

MEMORANDUM

EPA MAIL

SUBJECT: EPA's Commitment to Environmental Justice

TO: Assistant Administrators
General Counsel
Inspector General
Chief Financial Officer
Associate Administrators
Regional Administrators
Office Directors

The Environmental Protection Agency has a firm commitment to the issue of environmental justice and its integration into all programs, policies, and activities, consistent with existing environmental laws and their implementing regulations.

The Agency defines environmental justice to mean the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws and policies, and their meaningful involvement in the decisionmaking processes of the government. Among other things, this requires the following:

- (a) Conducting our programs, policies, and activities that substantially affect human health and the environment in a manner that ensures the fair treatment of all people, including minority populations and/or low-income populations;
- (b) Ensuring equal enforcement of protective environmental laws for all people, including minority populations and/or low-income populations;
- (c) Ensuring greater public participation in the Agency's development and implementation of environmental regulations and policies; and
- (d) Improving research and data collection for Agency programs relating to the health of, and the environment of all people, including minority populations and/or low-income populations.

In sum, environmental justice is the goal to be achieved for all communities and persons across this Nation. Environmental justice is achieved when everyone, regardless of race, culture, or income, enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards **and** equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.

The purpose of this memorandum is to ensure your continued support and commitment in administering environmental laws and their implementing regulations to assure that environmental justice is, in fact, secured for all communities and persons. Environmental statutes provide many opportunities to address environmental risks and hazards in minority communities and/or low-income communities. Application of these existing statutory provisions is an important part of this Agency's effort to prevent those communities from being subject to disproportionately high and adverse impacts, and environmental effects.

In the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), Congress could not have been any clearer when it stated that it shall be the continuing responsibility of the Federal government to assure for all Americans "safe, healthful, productive and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings."

Integration of environmental justice into the programs, policies, and activities via Headquarters/Regional Office Memoranda of Agreements and Regional Office/State Performance Partnership Agreements is an Agency priority. The Director of the Office of Environmental Justice, Barry E. Hill, and his staff are available to assist you. Barry Hill can be reached at (202)564-2515.

I am positive that each of you will join me in working to secure environmental justice for all communities.

/signed/

Christine Todd Whitman